AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1-8, 15, 18-25, 27, and 29 as set forth in the following listing of claims. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. - 8. (Canceled).

9. (Previously Presented) A display unit configured for use in a sign display panel comprising a controller electrically connected to a set of display units, the display unit comprising:

a central processing unit;

an interface for receiving a message sent by the controller; and

memory for storing display unit software configured for execution by the central processing unit, wherein the display unit software comprises instructions for:

determining if the message is at least one of a communication integrity message, a global message, or a local message,

reading an address byte of the message if the message is a local message,

executing the message if the address byte is 0 or decrementing the address byte and sending the message to another display unit if the address byte is greater than zero, and

detecting an error in the message and, if the error is detected, sending an error message to be received by the controller.

10. (Original) The display unit of claim 9 wherein the display unit software comprises instructions for detecting errors in parity.

11. (Canceled).

12. (Previously Presented) The display unit of claim 9 wherein the display unit software further comprises instructions for executing the message if the message is a global message.

13. - 15. (Canceled).

16. (Previously Presented) A display unit configured for use in a sign display panel comprising a controller electrically connected to a set of display units, the display unit comprising:

a central processing unit;

a timer set to a time interval;

an I/O interface for receiving a series of communication integrity messages from the controller; and

memory for storing display unit software configured for execution by the central processing unit, wherein the display unit software comprises instructions for resetting the timer to the time interval upon receipt of each of the series of communication integrity messages and, if the timer expires, generating an error message to be received by the controller, wherein the error message comprises an integer greater than a total number of display units in the set of display units and each display unit that receives the message decrements the integer.

17. (Previously Presented) The display unit of claim 16 wherein the error message comprises an indication of which display unit sent the error message.

18. - 25. (Canceled).

26. (Previously Presented) A set of sign display panel elements connected in a serial communication network wherein each element receives messages from a previous adjacent element and sends messages to a subsequent adjacent element, the set of elements comprising:

a controller comprising a central processing unit and a memory comprising controller software configured for execution by the central processing unit wherein the controller software comprises instructions for sending a series of communication integrity messages to the communication network; and

a set of display units wherein each one of the display units comprises:

a timer set to a time interval;

a central processing unit; and

a memory for storing display unit software configured for execution by the central processing unit wherein the display unit software comprises instructions for resetting the timer to the time interval upon receipt of each of the series of communication integrity messages and, if the timer expires, sending an error message to the communication network to be received by the controller, wherein the error message comprises an integer greater than a total number of the set of display units and each display unit that receives the error message from the communication network decrements the integer.

27. (Canceled).

28. (Previously Presented) A set of sign display panel elements connected in a serial communication network wherein each element receives messages from a previous adjacent element and sends messages to a subsequent adjacent element, the set of elements comprising:

a controller comprising a central processing unit and a memory comprising controller software configured for execution by the central processing unit wherein the controller software comprises instructions for sending a series of communication integrity messages to the communication network, wherein the controller software further comprises instructions for determining a display unit that sent the error message based on the error message; and

a set of display units wherein each one of the display units comprises:

a timer set to a time interval;

a central processing unit; and

a memory for storing display unit software configured for execution by the central processing unit wherein the display unit software comprises instructions for resetting the timer to the time interval upon receipt of each of the series of communication integrity messages and, if the timer expires, sending an error message to the communication network to be received by the controller, wherein the error message comprises an integer greater than a total number of the set of display units and each display unit that receives the error message from the communication network decrements the integer.

29. (Canceled).